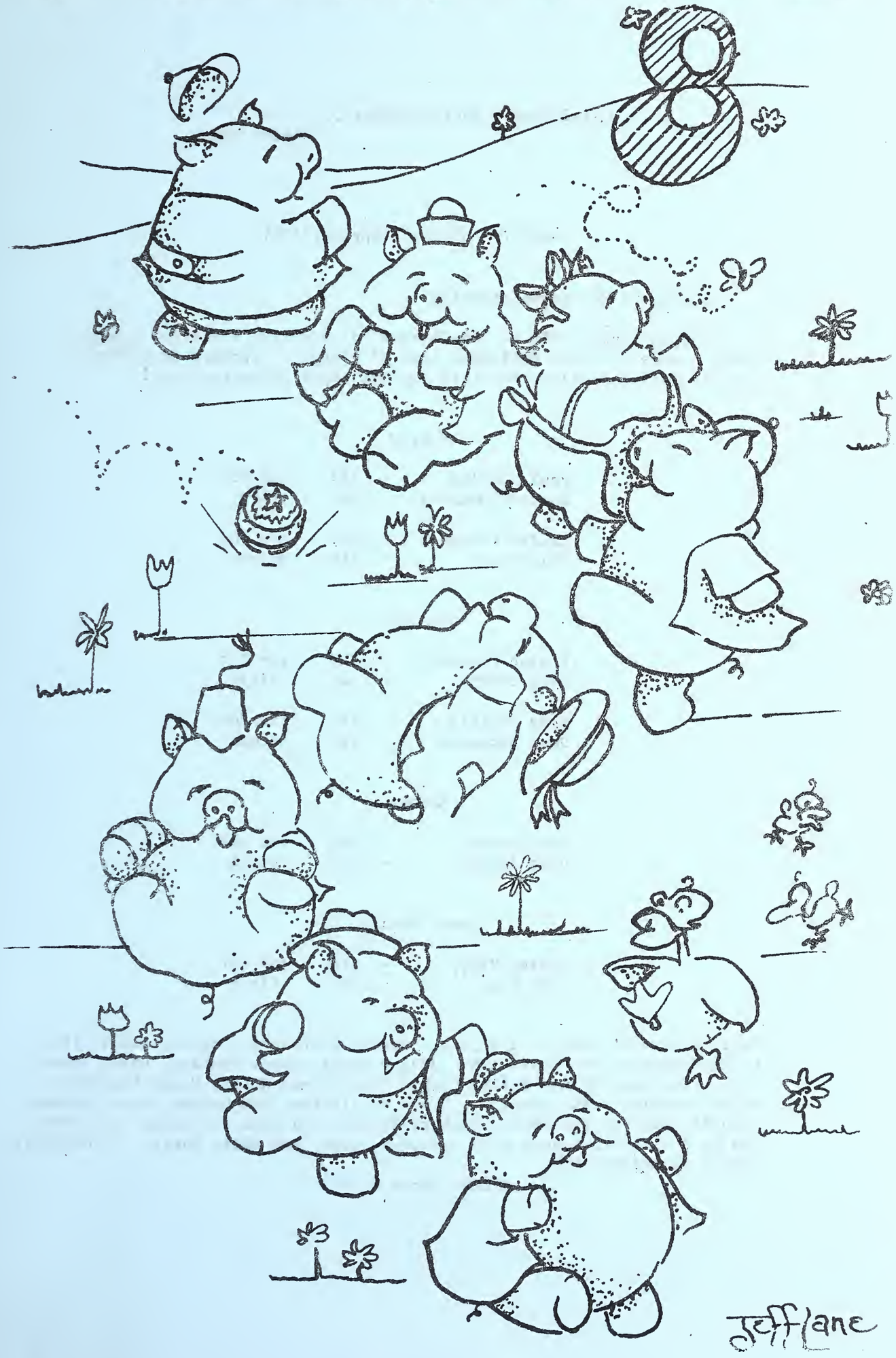
Mordgate 8



WORDEATER 8 STAFF

Gluttons.....Etha Griffin
Jean Tyrell
John Stobart
(faculty)
Poetasters.....Cookie Haas

Chief Cook & Bottle-Washer.....
Wesley Kropp

WORDEATER AWARDS (Spring, '74)

Loudmouth McKracken speaking:

Before hopping off to the 'border' J. Stobart, so-called judge of these awards left the following list of winners. Stobart is infamous for literary cowardice, but this cop-out caper takes the cake!

Poetry

Paul Hawkins	-	$25	tie for
Sharron McCartin	-	$25	first
Louise Converse	-	$10	tie for
Chip Guse	-	$10	second

Fiction

Louise Converse	-	$25	tie for
Doug Emory	-	$25	first
Etha Griffin	-	$10	tie for
Doug Richards	-	$10	second

Essays

Joe Caberra	-	$25	tie for
Dave Zordan	-	$25	first

Cover Design

Wesley Kropp	-	$10	tie for
Jeff Lane	-	$10	first

P.S. Loudmouth again. I am also burping bounteous beauties due to the wordsmithing of the following: Jacque Bebar, Chuck Binkley, Diane Bruske, Arlene Delrose, Bonnie Ellis, Cookie Haas, Linda Keith, Kathy Lusciatti, Peggy Kovacic, Betty Masching, Bruce McAllister, Tom McCabe, Wayne Mooney, Quintin Roberts, Tom Roach, Barbara Strait, and several "anons" who have fed us royally this year with wondrous, wise, and witty words: HONORABLEIFI CANESS Awardings then.

crEATe those WORDS!

COVER DESIGNS - Front - Wesley Kropp
Back - Jeff Lane

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Cradle - Jacque Bebar 1

Trip - Jacque Bebar 1

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The Forever Trip - Tom Csepregi 21

Acknowledgements

WORDEATER AWARDS (SPRING '74)

Irony

Higgledy-piggledy
Englebert Humperdink
Looking for something to
Bring him some fame.

Found a small title that's
Uncomplimentary.
But when asked he replies,
"What's in a name?"

Mark Benigni

A Lesson in Pragmatism

Piggley Wiggley
Franco-American
Sells long, thin spaghetti
Rolled into o's.

When asked why they do it,
Comes the howling reply
Overemphatically,
"That's how o's goes!"

Geoff Canady

Cradle

Soft lashes sleeping,
Flutters under the blanket
Child dreams in the night.

Jacque Bebar

Trip

Familiar rhythm,
Reality transcended
Escape thru music.

Jacque Bebar

1

I met a man who said "Look at me."
So I looked high and low and saw nothing.
  left and right - nothing.
The man laughed and said
  "The same, in each other, we see."

Anon.

2

Silence
nearly extinct
yet
when found
so audible
it nourishes insanity

Anon.

3

A man has no right to tread on
the paths of others, unasked.
If he does so, he may find himself
wandering into forests unexplored
Such a path tread upon once
often ne'er returns its trespassing wayfarer.....

Anon.

4

A heart needs loving words
  a soul needs only thoughts
A boy needs an idol to measure
  his growth by
A man has no need of an idol -
  he knows what he is and becomes.

Anon.

MANHATTAN CHOWDER

First we go 'round
'round
'round

On a turning wheel-
But the axle's broke
So we're stuck right here.
The drummer died a while back,
But then no one ever listened.
The sun grows cold
cold
cold-

But the ground is hot
And the rain is dry.
The mind goes black,
The hands are numb
The feet are gone
gone
gone.....

Like mushroom soup.

Louise Converse

on washington st.

he sits and talks of football-jimmy
and cake-baker louise.
a salty beer-tear rolls down a
wrinkled, winkled cheek, unnoticed;
catching the blue-gleam flash of
channel 7.

having done his searching,
losing hope,
he doesn't question anymore.
only sits and talks
sits and stumbles
sits and mumbles

about football-jimmy
and cake-baker louise.

...and the tear drops from
the grisly-beard face to the polished
oaken counter

and loses itself in drops of alcohol.

sharon mccartan

Desert eyes...

Desert eyes are burning,
From thoughts too sad to see.
Hidden in the arid lands,
Are words I'll never be.

Camel thoughts and
Year-long droughts--
Blue oceans far from seas.
Wondering now how it could be,
Were "I's" not "I's", but "we's".

Sandstorm days increasing,
Since dreams have since gone dry.
Is emptiness so pleasing,
When all I've got is "I"?

Sharon McCartan

enter insomnia

thoughts that have successfully
eluded by recognition
during the day
now find themselves victorious
and
shout before me.

taunting me, keeping me on guard,
they begin aching and burning my mind.

sweet dreams
begin to sour
and every night noise clatters
endlessley
into this swirling frenzy.

free-floating fear
slashes through me as the
longing for the comforting release
begins:

to be actually floating in
the middle of that fog--
to be cushioned and safe.

blankets and pillow rise in revolution,
as i long to cease the tumultuous storm
and enter that Dorothy-in-Oz calm...

and the clock races itself--

faster and faster,

banging out seconds, minutes, hours, days, years...

sharon mccartan

Driven

Sleep.

An hour of tossing and turning
And eyes are not sleepy
Mind is not weary
Body is exhausted.

Driven.

Like an unknown force
To an unknown future
On a path to what?
But must go on.

Quiet.

But a drum beats
In my mind
Where thoughts
March endlessly.

Worry.

About too many
Unsolvable
Problems--
Tomorrow.....

People.

With troubles
I can't seem to ease
Although I try
To help.

Driven.

To thinking
To talking
To worry
To pray
Tomorrow.....?

Love.

Is coming
Is sharing
Is shattered
Is lost?

Sleep.

Can't come
Tonight.
Too much
Worry.

Driven.

J. K. Oltman

NightStalker

a night where the heat and humidity won't let you sleep
in a one room cluttered apartment.
the tv in apartment 3D is on mothers scold their thirsty children
and it is 2 AM.
dampness warps one's mind like water does the thin carrot strip
so you leave to tire yourself with exercise;
you walk through your neighborhood.
suddenly from a dark shadow eyes appear and metal flashes
like chips on a revolving mirrored wall.
burdened by insomnia I try to listen cautiously inconspicuously.
they follow after me,
trembling with fear I falter
stumbling like an aged man with arthritis over the pocked street.
chincks become man holes.
AGAIN. . . . .they sight me round the boulevard and
I imagine.
my head pitches to check and spot my hunter.
fog clouds my vision.
is it them creeping or an ally
willing to take care of me and protect me from
the sure footed, methodic click of heels
from the thirty dollar, black metal wedged shoes?
FLEE but walk quicker
gurd the streets and alleys with leaps like a zebra
in a panicked frenzy from fire.
light streams down from the street lights
in holy beams which seem to follow and
expose me to them.
THEY SOUND NEARER
sweat beads around my forehead.
my eyes tear with fear and their vessels explode with red.
my feet slap the pavement creating pain I will ignore.
the small of my back bleeds a salty liquid.
a mist of damp choking air
envelopes and breathing is virtually impossible I pant
like a dog on a choker.
The street eats my ankle and I fall
crashing
like a wave on a rocky sea-scape.
I lie writhing in pain, squirming
half crazed by fear and physical pain.
a quick walk of the hunter turns to the
spot where the victim
lies kicking.
a shadow falls over me and I repent
for all the wrong and I cry and I plea
pitiously
for anything ANYTHING.
And a sure voice answers nothing

The fog is no longer a factor in sight
I see my stalker, my threatener, my killer the visage made from the
stifling heat of summer.
I look and see a police officer decorated in brass
guardian angel of the city
and I cry for my guilt forsaking the eventual good of man
and I want to wake in a different world
of
Confidence.
He helps me up and even sadder
he understands.

SEPTEMBER'S SONG

Well I just keep talking to myself,
And listening to the wind.
Looking at lost footsteps,
Where I know we've been.

Today there's no sun in the sky,
Only gray clouds passing by.
Like a lonely train into a tunnels' door,
And I wonder if I ever lived before.

Last Thursday morning had to say goodbye,
Friday night still comes, I don't know why.
Today there's no sun in the sky,
Only gray clouds passing by.
Like a lonely train into a tunnels' door,
And I wonder if I ever lived before.

Tomorrow it may rain, the papers say-
Who cares about the weather, anyway?
Today there's no sun in the sky,
Only gray clouds passing by.
Like a lonely train into a tunnels' door,
And I wonder if I ever lived before.

Six small pictures in a wallet, sure ain't much-
But now you're gone, that's all there's left to touch.
Today there's no sun in the sky,
Only gray clouds passing by.
Like a lonely train into a tunnels' door.
And I wonder if I ever lived before!

Robin R. Davis

Snow Covers the Ground

Snow covers the ground
And hides the mud
For awhile.
But then the sun shines,
The snow begins to melt,
The beauty begins to disintegrate.

Love clouds my mind and eyes.
It hides reality
For awhile.
But then truth and right barge in,
And color the love-clouds
And the tones begin to change
And the beauty begins to disintegrate.

J. K. Oltman

THE FOSTER LAND

In paper boats they sailed, before the dawn,
when monsters lurked in the western sea.
Kidnapped by the sea and carried off
to a strange land
beyond the world.

They stayed. And because the land was strange
they created new gods to rule it;
Gods of fire, greedy for blood,
with inhuman forms
to terrify the soul.

Their children's children were of the land,
their skins turned dark, their faces clean.
But they remembered a god unlike the rest
with white skin
and a great beard.

Mighty temples were built of brick and stone
to honor the twilight gods.
They fashioned idols of terrible beauty
of yellow gold
and precious things.

They went to war against the peoples
who had come before their fathers;
And hurled down the mighty kings and lords
and tore their hearts
from living breasts.

Then they ruled this land their fathers had found,
spreading the fear of their gods.
They offered gifts of human lives-
youths and maidens-
to the ever angry gods.

One day a messenger arrived at the haunted court
bringing word of wooden ships;
Of strange beasts and white-skinned men
with great beards
who spoke with thunder.

The court rejoiced, for the king proclaimed
the return of the white god to the land.
And donning his shining robes
Montezeuma went forth
to greet his god.

Louise Converse

Impaled on Institutional Tongs

Summer sets like the sun, causing dark fire in the land
Those cold flames fanned by autumn dreams engulf the high tower
All travelers stumble here, to the end of fair summer
To the purge of the tower, to stand alone on the sand
Above their ruin revolves the universal riddle
Life draws death beside itself then runs like a frightened child
And you
I have met your idol makers
(They have seemed so small)
And your wise mind-breakers
(Now stand them before the All)
These days that began in dawn gold have ended in evening blue
These days spent struggling to make one's life free yet metered verse
Finally finding the finest verses seldom touched behind the eyes
For all one's innovation one must still begin anew
We have looked to our bookshelves but their answers lie asleep
The subway prophet speaks, "Never love what is lost."
High cost
(For one who himself is lost)
Such searing torment to see
(For we are so rudely tossed)
My life is torn and slain by me
Ask the stars, where is the energy in security?
If man cannot reach heaven allow him to enjoy hell
Have him battle as a beast before counted out by the bell:
Rather blessed totality than intellectual sterility!
Remove the personalized crosses and bonds so ludicrous
For death is hollow laughter in an arid wilderness
Silence
Hear the echo of constant rain
As the fires grow colder
Gray light conquers the plain
Dirges ring for those one step bolder.

Douglas Emory

(song II)

i wrote him a letter
and i thought i'd ease the pain,
but i was wrong--again.

(it's all a matter of misinterpretation)

i was happy,
yet, i made them sad. . .

and i'm sorry.

it was the eve of a new year.
we were riding on the ice
in a frosted brown station wagon. . .

and i tried to tell them

but both got angry and turned
their thoughts elsewhere.

neil young was singing throughout the car
and i felt sorry.
at the stop sign, one turned his head

(". . . forget about the past and find someone new. . .")

and his eyes asked me,
but i couldn't answer.

hanging his head out the window, the other,
already brown-bottled, yelled, "manana, manana".

. . . but he never answered me.

(it's all a matter of misinterpretation)

AN ODE TO MY LOVE

They tell me you are gone;
But I can still feel your nearness.
In quiet moments I hear your voice,
Assuring me of my worth and the
love we once shared.

My faith tells me that you are in a
far better place,
But still in my solitude.

Your presence is so close.
I feel your touch,
I see your smile.

No, you've not gone my love:
I'm holding you close to my breast.

MARION STAFFORD

Memories

Memories eliminate the years
and reveal our life
Memories are filled with tears
and laughter and rest and strife.
Memories bring back
the long lost and long forgotten.
Memories are in strange ways:
They give meaning to dull days and old ways
Memories make today important

Tom Csepregi

The Field

The field was varied in color.
It ranged from the brown of the old grasses to the
Green of the young.
It was teeming with life, which when it took something,
Also returned something.
The field was silent; its solitude unintempted by strife.
The serenity was disturbed only by the wind and the
Rustling of the field mice.

The rape of the field was quick and complete
Acres were covered by the grey monotony which was
The City
Food came in from miles away,
The field was no longer fertile.
Man fought man for room to live,
The field was no longer big enough for all.
Man had taken and destroyed forever the home of the
Field mice.

Dave Zordan

THE FANTASY OF SELF

Conscious emotion guiding wasted ways
Life-force trapped in the undercurrent of ego
Vital transformation's well-hidden rays
Animal contentment aspiring humanity
Faces lost reality through endless days

Run through the pages, turn the key
Set back the timepiece, set us free
Play back old notions, top the tree
As Knowledge suffocates own accumulations
Of self-made contrivances
Yet can't accept the blame for its trials and tribulations
Unintelligent derivations
Gold of the rainbow broken in half

Reality found as its tread on by so few
But Truth lost in the view
Rarely glimpsed but oft' seen though lost in the
Magic in our eyes
Fantastic age of the sorcerer's decline
But not in our minds
Fantasy as knowledge on a
Tower in the skies

The motion forces itself to be heard
Surprising early risers and instructs them how to learn
Yearn for the Future, yield the past
Seen through thick walls of smoky glass
Move up the river flowing fast

Strike down the timepiece, lose the key
Move through the city, feeling free
Gain newer insights, fruits of the tree
As reality conquers idle fantasy's notions
Of self-made divinity
And newer Truth beheld as it's set in motion
Dancing to the alternate tune
Life once more a glorious challenge

Colorful wisdom under new multi-colored sun,
Witnessed by everyone, fly on the Truth
Change over all realistic fantasy now
Fantastic reality meaningful life
Yesterday's forgotten tales submerged in new outlooks
Knowledge grows from the myriad seeds
From the old dying tree
Self reviewed as all become One
Awaken by the soft strains
of long-forsaken reality
To the Truth glimpsed in the dreams of few.

CHUCK BINCKLEY

I

The only difference between a cloud and a fog is their relative positions to the viewer. So why do children gaze into the sky wishing to be part of a fog . . . and why, when a cloud comes to claim it's dreamers, is it met with disdain.

II

The only difference between memories and realities is how the viewer perceives them. So why do we mellow a memory; turn reality ruthless. When reality is conquered it is embedded into our minds for future refuge.

III

The only difference between right and wrong is the law a society has set as the standard of judging. So why doesn't the law change when people change. So often they become obsolete; like the people who made them.

IV

The only difference between life and death lies in the presence of brain waves on a man-made machine. Isn't it possible to check the flow of a brain wave--and appear dead--but be living in a world of your own.

Relativism . . . the answer to oh so many questions.

Arlene Delrose

"Young Love"

It was the day of the party and I was really excited. I would see her again after a month of separation. I was beginning to get nervous because I didn't know how I would approach Joan after all that time. The only thing I was certain of was that I loved her and I wanted her back. The party seemed to be my last resort.

It was a cold winter day with huge, gray, clouds that looked like flesh eating monsters. There was snow on the ground but it was matted down and very dull. It was depressing outside so I decided to stay indoors for the day.

I sat around contemplating the fun I would have that evening. I tried to control my thoughts, but Joan kept reentering my mind. She had really meant a lot to me and all of the loving memories returned to me.

Joan and I had gone together for four months. We went out quite a lot, but we had fun no matter what we did. We hardly ever had fights and when we did, we made up right away.

It was fun while it lasted, but problems began to arise. Joan began constantly mentioning her sister's boyfriend Jerry. That was all I began to hear until I couldn't take it anymore. Joan admitted to me that she had liked Jerry originally, but her sister Janet had gotten a hold of him before she could make a move. I really got mad when I heard all of that and wanted to call it quits. That "break-up day" was coming back to me very quickly.

That day we had met at the laundromat where Joan had worked. We didn't say much at all but just looked at each other. She could sense something was wrong and she kept asking me what my problem was.

"I have no problem," I kept on saying.

"Jimmy, are you mad because of the snowball fight I told you I had with Jerry?"

"You've damn right I am. I'm sick of it. Jerry, Jerry, Jerry, that's all I ever hear!"

There was silence for a long time. Joan's face began to turn as white as the snow that was falling. She looked at me and I started to talk.

"I'm sorry Joan, but I don't think we're going to make it. I think it would be best if we just broke up."

"No Jimmy, no, I don't want that!" Her eyes began to turn red and the tears started to fall.

"There's no other way, . . . I just can't take it anymore."

I really began to feel bad and I wanted to reach out to her. I wanted to make everything better right then and there, but something inside of me wouldn't let me. She gave me back my ring and I said goodbye with a crackling voice. I walked out the door and my own tears started.

It all seemed so fresh in my mind and I couldn't forget it. I missed that girl like a husband misses his wife. I wanted her to be my girl again and maybe talking to her again would do the trick.

The afternoon went by quickly. I thought out what I'd say to her that night. It was getting pretty close to 7:30 so I began to get ready. I took a shower, shaved my "peach fuzz mustache" and dressed. I then saw the bottle of Brut on my dresser that Joan had given me for my birthday. The small card that came with it was still attached to the bottom of the bottle. I picked it up and read it. It said, "To Jimmy, with all of my love, Joan." That did wonders for my ego as I splashed some of the stuff on my face.

It was time to leave so I said goodbye to my parents and took off in my Dad's car. It was a thrill to drive since I'd only had my license for three months. It took ten minutes to get to Mark's house but it seemed like hours. When I pulled in the drive way, signs of partying were all over. There were about thirty people there already, and some were plastered.

When I got inside I spotted a few friends, but Joan wasn't in sight. I was very impatient and began asking Mark where she was. He told me she'd be there any minute.

I sat around and waited, turning my head everytime that door bell rang. It rang constantly and I began to give up. I got tired of sitting so I stood up and looked straight ahead. As I turned my head Mark said, "There's your X." I looked as fast as I could and there she was! She really looked sexy that night with her long blonde hair, slightly curled at the ends, and her blue pullover sweater, matching her eyes. My heart began to pound as she walked closer to me.

She came up to me and said, "Hi Jimmy, how are you?"

"Great Joani, just great. You sure are looking good these days."

"Oh, Jimmy, come on."

"Really, I'm not joking."

All of the guts I had had that afternoon were beginning to return as I talked. She was telling me all about Janet when I suddenly noticed a huge class ring that looked like a silver doughnut wrapped around her finger. My heart trembled as I glared at that massive ring. All of my courage disappeared and I returned to my seat. Joan finally caught on that I had noticed and said, "You mean you haven't heard that Jerry and I are going together?"

"No, I haven't," I said.

"Yeah, Janet broke up with him two weeks ago and now we're going together."

I looked at her for a long time and said, "Do you really like him?"

There was a long pause before Joan even looked at me. I began to wonder if she had heard me.

"Jimmy," she said, "You know that I'm not very good at saying things . . . All I can say is that I really care for you, and I'm trying to forget you by going with Jerry. I was doing pretty good but seeing you here is just too much to take."

I sat there listening, feeling like I never felt before. I got up from my seat and held her like I'd never let her go. I took her face and held it in my hands. I stared into her sparkling blue eyes for a second and then kissed her. We stood in the middle of the floor for fifteen minutes telling each other how much we missed and loved each other. We noticed that we were being watched so we moved into a corner in the living room.

We sat, talked and kissed for what seemed like hours. We really had a beautiful make up and we both agreed to stay together for a long time. Mark kept bringing beer to us, and I was beginning to feel it. I wanted to stop drinking so I could remember that special night.

We sat in the corner a little longer, hearing that door bell ring every other second. We were talking about old times and the future when a big framed person approached us.

"Jerry, what are you doing here?" Joan said.

"I have a better question, doll, what are you doing here with him?"

No sooner had he said that than I felt five fat fingers hit my mouth. He had hit me hard and I could feel the blood running down my chin. My head was spinning as I half sat in that chair, trying to get up. The booze was really taking over and I began to feel sick. All I could see was Joan trying to get Jerry away from me.

"Leave him alone Jerry, can't you see he's drunk."

"I don't give a damn, you two timing dog."

Joan and Jerry were really at it. The stereo was turned off and all of the individual conversations stopped. Jerry's voice was getting louder as he called Joan a bitch. Joan stood there very relaxed and calm. He kept throwing obscene comments at her and I wished that I had the strength to beat his brains out. Jerry remained silent for a while, his heavy breathing filling the room.

"Are you through?" Joan said.

"Yes I am," said Jerry.

Joan took it from there. "Take your damn ring and get the hell out of here," she screamed. "I never want to see you again, you creep."

Jerry took his ring and left, slamming the door behind him. He almost knocked the transmission out of his car as he dug out. The loud muffler could be heard all the way down the block.

The party started again, and Joan came over to me with a wet wash cloth for my mouth. She was wiping the blood under my chin, and I never felt so cared for in my life. The bleeding did stop after a while and Joan wanted to take me home. She had come to the party with a friend and told her to pick her up at my house.

Without a license, Joan drove me home in my Dad's car. Holding each other tight we stayed parked in front of my house until her friend's headlights appeared. Joan came with me to the door and I kissed her goodnight. Walking into the house I told her I loved only her and that I'd see her the next day to go sled riding.

Tom Keenan

WHO AM I

It was another typical morning. The dog was barking at the milkman. Coffee was perking in the kitchen. The oatmeal was on warm, and posted was my wife's usual little note telling us to have a good day and that she had walked the dog.

My wife, a wonderful woman, was usually the first to leave in the morning. She is a secretary for a real estate company on the other side of town. My wife and I have lived here in Witchita, Kansas ever since we've been married. My children, Donald, thirteen, and Susan, twelve, just love it here. They would never want to move.

"You both come down here and eat some breakfast," I yelled. I took a cup of coffee and went into the living-room, I could not have anything else if I tried.

As I looked out the window, I watched the trees sway from the spring breeze and saw the first robin of this year. Birds amaze me. They are so content and free and peaceful. Ah.., peaceful, I have never known how that feels. Oh dear God please...,

"What are you staring at dad," asked Donald.

"Oh, nothing," I mumbled.

"Dad," said Donald, looking hopefully at me, "can you come to school after work and watch us play ball?"

As I turned to look at my son I realized how fast he had grown. He is already thirteen. Donald has always been a sports-minded person. He takes after his Uncle Bill, my wife's brother. I am happy he does because in my younger days I never was too involved in any type of sport. God knows I tried, but I would always prefer sitting with the girls and just watching.

"Well, can you dad," asked Donald again. "Then you can meet my coach; he's a great guy, dad."

"We'll see, son," I said. "Where is Susan?" I asked, changing the subject.

Susan was a beautiful daughter, inside and out. She is a kind, loving, and sensitive child. She was only twelve, yet sometimes she would look at me and whisper, "Daddy what's wrong?"

"Here I am," said Susan. I wiped my eyes fast and said, "How's my girl today?"

"I'm fine," she said smiling. She then gave me a big kiss and said, "I hope you have a nice day, daddy."

I drove up to the McDonaldson Insurance Agency where I am employed. When I got to my office, I knew I would not be able to get anything done. I told my secretary I wasn't feeling well and left.

I wanted to go for a long drive and just think about myself. I've always been mixed up about myself. I was born a man physically but not mentally. I have always had the inner feelings of a woman.

Ever since the age of twelve I knew I was different. I would always admire girls clothes and jewelry and in fact still do. I always enjoyed doing things with the girls. If I had a choice between going shopping with my mother, or fishing with my father, I would have liked to choose shopping but would force myself to go fishing. I remember one time crying and telling my parents something was wrong with me, but my father would always say, "Oh son, you're just worrying about nothing. Not all boys like the same things," and would change the subject.

One afternoon when I was fifteen, I had an urge to do my hair, put on makeup, and put on my mom's dress. My mother walked in unexpectedly and saw me. I felt ashamed. She cried and laughed at the same time and said something about a joke. "We won't tell dad about your joke, okay Nicky?" ambiguously.

I then went on to college. That is where I met my wife. She was an old fashioned girl, very kind and thoughtful. We married later and soon had two children.

We have now been married 14 years. Years that I can't explain to you. Sometimes I thought I wasn't going to make it. I had to leave. My head would spin. Then I'd look at my wife and children and just couldn't. My children meant everything to me.

14 years of frustration, disgust, and misery. Sometimes I would feel very normal, but then I'd go in my wife's room when she wasn't home and try on her dresses. When she bore our children, I was jealous, wishing I was her.

By this time my mind was just spinning. I stopped the car and cried out, "Dear God, help me." I have been to a psychiatrist, but he couldn't help me too much. He told me about a clinic of transexualization in Chicago. Was this my answer?

Six months have gone by since that drive in the car and alot has happened. I decided it was either telling my wife or committing suicide. Maybe they would eventually accept me, I thought, so I did tell my wife.

My wife, like I should have expected tried so hard to understand. She definitely thought I should go seek help. We both went to the clinic in Chicago.

I am now Miss Nichole Johnson, and I live in Chicago, and am still in insurance. My wife didn't want the children to know, but it was something I had to do. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do.

I'll never forget their faces, especially my son. I hoped I hadn't lost them completely, that maybe some day they would accept the fact that I was a woman and was very happy, happier than I'd ever been.

About 5 months later I received a long distance phone call from Witchita, Kansas. "Hello," I said.

"Daddy, daddy is that you? It's Susan." My eyes teared and lips trembled, "Susan honey, how's my girl?"

"Fine, daddy, I just want to tell you I miss you and love you, daddy, no matter who you are."

That was yesterday, one of the happiest days in my life. I am still waiting and hoping for another phone call, a phone call from my son.

Peggy Kovacic

It's How You Play the Game

Eight of us were playing basketball at the park in the small town of Rankin. It was Saturday afternoon in late April, and if not for the breeze, would have been too hot to do anything.

The teams were fairly even, and the score see-sawed back and forth. Neither side ever got more than two baskets ahead of the other. All of us were on the high school team.

We had been playing about forty-five minutes when a car pulled up. It was an old, beat-up Dart. Four guys got out. I recognized two of them, Wallace and Fink, both from Hoopeston. Lately they had been coming to town every weekend looking for trouble. They usually waited 'till night though.

Two of the guys that had been playing decided they were tired and left.

"Us four'll take you guys," Wallace announced.

"I'll sit out," said Mark Hendricks, a bench-warmer, as he walked off the court.

"Alright we'll take you," I said, "we get the ball out first."

"Hell if you do, you've got the advantage."

Five to four would have been an advantage in a good game of basketball. I was four inches taller than their tallest man, and the others were as tall or taller than all of them, too. However, I had played games like this before. It usually resembled football or roller derby more than basketball.

I wasn't to be disappointed. Wallace shot and missed, and one of the Hoopeston hoods rebounded, nearly taking Jim Diskin's head off with his swinging elbow.

The game continued, getting rougher all the time. It was just a matter of time before one of us would get mad enough to get rough back. When that happened, you could expect all four of the Hoopeston creeps to jump on him.

I knew for a fact that Wallace and Fink always had knives with them, and the two others probably did, too. As we played, I looked around for something to use when the time came. Over on the grass were a couple of 16 oz. coke bottles. That would do.

We played another ten minutes. Diskin shot the ball and missed. As he was coming in to rebound, Fink stepped in front of him and elbowed him in the face. Without thinking, Diskin pushed him away and called him a few choice names.

This was it. I didn't even have to look back to know Diskin was getting his head beat in. I picked up both bottles and turned back. Fink had already battered Diskin's face to a pulp, and then Gary Cornelius had jumped Fink. Everyone else joined in then. I yelled to Gary and threw him a bottle.

One of the hoods I didn't know knocked "Buck" Alt down and started kicking him in the ribs. He had his back to me when I started to swing the bottle. Some sixth sense must have made him turn toward me just as the bottle connected with his skull. His eyes glazed over, and he got a silly look on his face. He took a step and then sat down in slow motion.

Gary was making good use of his bottle, too. He was backing Fink up by hitting him where he could. He wasn't able to land a good blow to the head though.

I saw Fink reach in his picket, and I shouted, "Look out Gary, he's got a knife! He's got a knife!"

Fink pulled out a lock-blade knife and opened it. Wallace had gotten his knife out too. It was a four-inch skinning knife and also had a lock-blade.

Everyone backed away from the two. I reached down and hit the bottle on the cement. It didn't break, so I hit it again, and this time it broke leaving long, jagged edges. Gary did the same. Hendricks ran up with a thick tree limb, about two feet long, for a weapon. We were hoping we could get them to back off, but there was to be none of that.

Wallace and Fink approached in a low crouch, the knives moving from side to side in front of them. The kid I didn't know was being held by our guys.

We spread out a little bit. Wallace was heading for me, and Fink was after Gary.

Fink was the first to make a move. He slashed at Gary and caught him across the chest. It sliced the shirt and turned it red. Hendricks at almost the same time stepped in and clubbed Fink over the head with the limb, knocking him senseless.

I made my move then, going straight for Wallace's face. The edges sunk in and blood began running down his neck. He wasn't out of it by any means, though. With a lunge and quick flip of the wrist, he had cut me across my left arm. The razor-sharp blade made a thin, red line that oozed blood for a few seconds and then started gushing.

Hendricks moved to Wallace's right and I came head on. In the movies, this would be the time where I'd tell Hendricks to back off, and I'd take Wallace myself. It was supposed to have something to do with honor. But that's a bunch of crap. Wallace had been in jail at least twice, both times for knifing someone. This didn't have one thing to do with honor. No street fight does.

Hendricks swung the limb at his head. Wallace had to raise his right arm to protect himself. He dropped the knife when the limb hit his arm, and I stepped in and rammed the broken bottle into his stomach as hard as I could. He fell backward and I fell on top of him jamming the bottle in, almost to the neck.

In a few minutes, the town cop pulled up and jumped out of his car with his gun drawn. He was so fat, he waddled when he ran. He looked so ridiculous, I had to laugh. And I couldn't stop, not even when he told me Wallace was dead.

Doug Richard

"The Eagle's Eye"

It was a warm Friday night in July and the humid breeze whippel through Jim's hair as his MG sped along the highway. It was twenty-five miles from the Naval base in Bainbridge to his apartment across the border in an isolated Pennsylvania town. The tape player filled the air with the sound of the Allman Brothers and he tapped his finger on the steering wheel to the beat of the music.

But he couldn't fill the lonely void with the normally stimulating sounds. All he could think of was Carla. She was tall with medium-length black hair and dark eyes that he loved to light up. She was soft and tender and knew how to make him really laugh. They were to be married in September back home in Iowa.

He sighed as he thought of Carla, his parents, and his buddies in Iowa. This wasn't the only time he had thought of driving right past that exit and going AWOL just to be home again. "How do those bastards expect us to take all their shit for ten hours a day?" Jim shouted to the trees. He couldn't face another empty night at the apartment. Sure there was Bill and Jack, but they were in the same position as Jim, sick of the Navy and longing for something else - who really knows what?

The route 64 exit came up and Jim disgustedly turned off on it. Riding along for about ten minutes, a red, yellow and white flashing sign caught his attention. THE EAGLE'S EYE it read. He'd heard about the place before but had never been there. Now seemed a good time to stop and find out what it was like.

"Hey, this place isn't bad," he thought, walking into a large, dimly lit room, tables crowded with young people and a four-man band warming up. He sat down at one of the tables and ordered a bottle of sangria. The place was just alive with gaiety and activity. The band had started playing and a few people got up to dance. Responding to the irresistible beat, many more joined while Jim sat alone enjoying his wine. He was beginning to enjoy watching the dancers and thought how Carla would love this place. She's such a good dancer and really has a good time at it.

"Hi! Would you care to dance?" she smiled. Jim looked up, startled at the intrusion of his thoughts. Long, blonde hair cascaded to her trim waist and her smile was the perfect touch to a classically featured face. "I'm really nothing to brag about," Jim answered, just noticing how appealing she really was. "Oh, come on! We don't have to try anything fancy," she pleaded. Reasoning that there couldn't be anything wrong with just dancing with a girl, he got up. The first dance was a loud, fast one, but they managed to exchange names and chat about the music. Ready to return to his table, she grabbed him and said she loved the next song and would he please hold her a little tighter.

They danced for almost an hour. It felt wonderful to have woman in his arms again and she was so soft and warm — like Carla. They hardly talked to each other, but each was aware of every movement on the part of the other. "When do you have to go home?" Jim asked her. "Whenever you want to," she whispered, looking extremely serious. Then she threw her golden silk behind her shoulders and smiled gently. "I live about six miles from here." Jim looked

at her thoughtfully and said he would take her home.

They reached her apartment door and she told him that he didn't have to come in if he didn't want to. Then he smiled and asked her what she had to drink. They sat around awhile drinking and listening to her stereo. Neither one of them wanted to talk. Jim put his arm around her and kissed her quickly but nicely on the lips. They continued and it seemed inevitable that he would be staying the night. They finally retreated to her bedroom and in their loneliness they made love.

Waking up in the early hours of the morning, Jim turned over and stroked the silken locks on the pillow next to his, wondering about Carla—— wondering how lonely she was right now.

Kathy Lusciatti

Upon the Death of Mr. Clinton Steed

It was midnight, a dark moonless night in March, and she was sleeping. She was dreaming about the hospital - the bed sores, the man in room two-nineteen who moaned "Katherine . . . Katherine . . ." for hours on end, and the constant smell of urine that clung to her uniform after a full day of work. Her dreams surrounded and engulfed her, pounding dully into her unconscious with a grim insistance. During the day while she worked she kept her emotions enclosed as though in a container; she wouldn't allow her thoughts to dwell on the hollow eyes of the dying. But when night fell the container opened, spilling out the horrors of reality reflected in those sunken eyes.

Ever since she had taken the job as a nurses' aide at the hospital, Chris had been plagued by these restless dreams of pale and sunken faces — the faces of the sick, the faces of the dying clinging with frail hands to the last shreds of their lives.

Her nights became fitful, each span of sleep sure to bring them all back to her surrealistically, blending the real with the unreal. And her encounter with Clinton Steed earlier that night had blown away all the peace, all the healing that sleep possesses.

She was new at the hospital, new at checking blood pressures, new at giving bedpans and conforting the old dying people who asked feebly where they were or what day it was. She was young enough to feel immortal, yet old enough at eighteen to imagine herself somewhat worldly. Having had few encounters with the dying, she had never touched death and death had never touched her.

She had worked the three-to-eleven shift that evening and at six-fifteen P.M. Mr. Clinton Steed, a cardiac patient, had died. Six hours later, at home in bed, Chris replayed the scene clearly, trying to sort her ideas and emotions.

Mr. Steed, as one nurse had said with an airy wave of her hand, was gone. He had died with a half a dozen doctors and nurses on top of him pounding at his chest, trying in vain to revive his failing heart.

At six-twenty Linda, an aide with a year and a half of experience had turned to Chris casually. "Looks like we'll have to wrap him, she observed, noticing the doctors and nurses leaving Mr. Steed's room. Chris nodded quietly and followed Linda to the utility room to get a shroud kit.

The shroud kit consisted of a large piece of white plastic to wrap the body in and several long and short strings to secure the plastic with once the body was wrapped. Linda had written down on a sheet of paper in the utility room - "Requisitioned by: Room 229, bed two, Clinton Steed, one shroud kit." Linda grinned sadly at Chris. "His last expense as a patient," she observed wryly.

Chris had entered room two-twenty-nine rather hesitantly. Mr. Steed's body was lying on the bed, his mouth hanging open, his eyes only half-closed, his whole body expressing exhaustion. Chris had stood on one side of the bed, Linda on the other. When they had removed the hospital gown from the body, Chris lifted the dead man's cold, limp arm and tried to suppress her conflicting emotions. Her mind flashed on Hollywood death — the dignified dead - former patients of Marcus Welby and Doctor Kildare; the sensational dead - the bad guy shot to death by the cops, the woman dying with a secret on her lips, Romeo and Juliet, Marilyn Monroe. Chris, with her warm hand touching the cold and purple-tinged flesh, looked at death for the first time stripped bare of all the myths of dignity and sensationalism. This death was gross, crass, a sad and unjust epitaph to the ending of a human life.

Linda had then slipped her hands underneath the body and turned it toward Chris in order to get the shroud under the body. Upon their turning the body, Mr. Steed's stomach gurgled and he emitted a loud belch. Noticing Chris'

shocked expression, Linda had begun laughing. Chris had stood dumbfounded, struck by a desire to vomit.

Her nausea passing, Chris then softly and hesitantly echoed Linda's laughter, marvelling at her companion's insensitivity and wondering about her own. They had finished wrapping Mr. Steed and left him — one identification tag attached to a string encircling his chest and one tied around his right toe.

It was midnight, a dark, moonless night in March and Mr. Clinton Steed was dead. Somewhere Mrs. Steed lay weeping in her bed, perhaps comforted by a relative.

Chris lay in bed restlessly sorting through myth and reality, looking for truth and significance and finding it frustratingly elusive. As Mr. Steed's body lay frozen with rigor mortis, Chris turned her warm, breathing body on its side conscious of its circulation, its twitching muscles and the rhythm of its heartbeat, and drifted into a deep silent sleep. But soon the dreams would return, vividly recalling the sick, the dying, and the forever deceased. The dead are a long time getting buried.

Karola Limbach

UP, DOWN and BEHIND

I sat up in bed thinking. I am sixteen years old today. Tomorrow morning my dad and I are going to the Driver's Examination center in Marycrest. I was too excited, so I picked up a book. The book was Masters-Johnson's analysis of human sexuality. I tossed the book back onto the floor. I felt very uncertain whether I would pass the examination. I tossed and turned for some time. But my body finally relaxed and I soon began dreaming about Sexy Sadie.

My alarm went off around nine o'clock. I jumped out of bed. My blue jeans were in a pile of dirty clothes in a corner opposite my bed. I put myself together and darted off for the kitchen. While clambering down the stairs, I crossed paths with my older brother.

"Good luck, I hope you pass your test," he said.

"Hey Steve! Can I use your car tonight?"

"If you pass the test, you can use my car. What did you plan on doing tonight?"

"I have made plans to visit a friend, a girl friend."

I laughed and continued to the kitchen. I found dad drinking his morning cup of coffee and ma still half asleep in her robe.

"Good morning ma, dad. Are we still going to the examination center today?"

"Yeah, no problem, but I'm expected downtown this morning." He paused to finish his coffee. "Ready to leave?"

I drove the car all the way to Marycrest for some last minute practice. We parked right in front of the building.

"The Oldsmobile handles like a tank," as we approached the building.

"Please remember to drive slow, don't get excited, and be courteous to the man."

I felt the nervousness in my body mount as we entered through the glass door. I grew impatient while answering questions, signing my name to different papers. Then she made me raise my right hand and say, "I do."

"Just sit down and a man will call off your name," she said.

"Thank you." She stared at me as if she were going to throw her pen at me. I followed my dad and sat next to him. We patiently waited for this man.

"I hope my tester doesn't take a long time. I wouldn't want to make you late for any appointment."

"Thomas P. Urbo," someone said. I turned my head, looked around and said, "Here I am."

"Will you follow me, please." It was my turn. His neat uniform and hat told me he was my examiner.

He went out the door first, and I just followed. He talked and acted as if I had been through this a thousand times before with him.

"Nice day, today?" I asked hoping for only a kind word.

"It's much too hot," he answered. I felt like asking if he was a happily married man. Somehow I felt he wasn't in the best of moods. His wife probably told him she didn't like the way they had fun in bed anyway.

As we continued with the test, he still didn't say very much. He just kept scratching away at his report sheet. I could have predicted my coming failure and the test wasn't over, yet. I was right because when we returned to the parking lot, he explained all my mistakes for over five minutes to me.

"You can try the test a second time with another examiner," he said.

"That sounds good." I didn't feel very proud of myself.

I felt embarrassed walking through the door.

"I didn't pass the test."

"Why don't you try the test a second time. I have enough time for you to try it again." I went back to the lady at the counter. I asked if I could take the test again. She gave me a funny grin this time and instructed me to sit down and wait again. I didn't feel like saying anything this time. Fifteen minutes passed, an older gentleman wearing a big smile called off my name and I just hoped for the best.

I felt all my pant pockets. I couldn't feel the keys anywhere. I looked on the counter, on the floor, and around a few isles of chairs. I had the only set of keys. I felt sick inside. My examiner was already outside waiting for me. Thank God my dad was too involved with his notebook to notice my predicament. I walked outside.

"It turned out to be a very nice Monday," he said looking into the sun.

"Yeah. Today just doesn't seem to be my day. Somehow I've managed to misplace the ignition key." He smiled and didn't seem to care.

"They're probably in the car," he said.

I felt so relieved when I climbed into the car because they were in the ignition. The examination began and I couldn't have done better. He just sat back in the seat enjoying himself. A radio station was playing "Hey Jude," a Beatle song. I just had to turn on the air conditioner. I successfully completed my turnabout when he said, "You've passed your test. Why don't you turn left at the next intersection and head towards the station."

"Yes sir! I know someone who is gonna be surprised when I drive up to her house."

"Do you have a girl friend?"

"I guess so. I met her about two weeks ago at a party. She has a steady boyfriend, but she seems pretty friendly when I called her on the phone."

Everything was going in my favor now. My parking space was still vacant when I returned to the parking lot. I grabbed the keys out of the ignition this time. With a big broad smile, the wind blowing my hair, I jumped and tried clicking my heels in the air. My tester laughed so loud while entering through the glass door that the people inside turned and wondered. His laughter even caught my dad's attention because he looked up and smiled.

"Good luck with that little lady. I hope she gives you a fair shake," he said, while walking towards a back office.

"Did you pass the test, son?"

"That I did!"

As we left the building, both of us were wearing smiles. I felt strange. I wasn't sure if he was smiling for a completely different reason or not.

"May I drive you downtown, sir?"

"Now that you have your driver's license who is going to pay for my increased auto insurance premiums?"

"Well." I stopped to wait for an opening in the traffic.

"Let's make a deal," my dad said.

"What kind of a deal?" It was going to be his way or no other way at all.

"You can find a job, pay for your own insurance and gas, or."

"Or what!" I said desperately for another better alternative.

"Or, you get your hair cut. Then I'll pay for your insurance and gas until the end of summer."

"A hair cut!" There was no other alternatives to my dilemma.

"Let me think about it for a while. I'll take the car home." I stopped the car in front of his office building.

"I'll call home for a ride." He climbed out of the car and I drove off.

When I drove into our driveway, I just sat and stared at myself in the car mirror. I tried to picture my head with short hair again. I couldn't even bear the thought. I felt suicidal. I tool the ladder out of the garage and thought of jumping off from the highest peak of our roof. Why do I try so hard? When life comes to an end it wouldn't matter at all. I scaled the ladder and proceeded to climb the hot tar papered roof. I stopped to sit next to the chimney. The wind was from the south. I had a bird's eye view of the street below. Down on the street came a welcome site. It was the girl who lived only a few doors away. She was a pretty girl even with her crutches.

"Sue!" I shouted.

"What are you doing way up there?"

"I am only going to jump off." She laughed and dropped one of her crutches and asked, "Are you too busy to talk?"

"No! I'll be right down." Sue had just moved into the neighborhood. She went to a different high school than I did.

I climbed down, ran around the house and out to her in the street as fast as I could. She had the prettiest smile every time I would look at her.

"You are so silly. I wonder if you'll ever grow up?"

"Someday." I felt good as my heart pumped away. "Let's go back on the patio. Everything is so beautiful today." I wanted to chat. We sat and talked all afternoon. I walked her home and said good-by.

I walked down the street passed my house. I wanted to visit Sexy Sadie. She only lived two blocks away. I couldn't be more conveniently located. I am a favorite with the neighborhood females. Cindy, a dog who lived across the street, began to bark and chase me down the street. She must be a very jealous girl, because she followed me to Sadie's house. Sadie's parents had some money. They lived in an expensive home with a fancy landscape. Her front door was open. I rang the door bell. Sally answered the door. Sally answered the door.

"What's happening Danny. Come in." She had more than just a pretty smile.

"I passed my test this morning."

"That's great! When are you going to take me for a ride in your car?"

"I don't have a car, yet. But I can use my brother's car tonight."

"I'll go change. Then we'll leave and cruise the loop."

She wasted no time changing. She dragged me out of the house in a hurry. Her mother didn't like me very much. We walked back to my house for the car. I could smell her perfume even outside in the wind. I found the keys and we drove off together in my brother's little blue Maverick.

We rode around for hours. We stopped for ice cream at a local drive-in. She was having a lovely time. All night I noticed that she was gradually moving closer to me. After a while she sat so close, I had to ask her to move over so I could drive safely. The fuel gauge also gradually moved to the empty side. Maybe they were trying to tell me something. So I promptly headed for home.

Night and its darkness had grown upon us when we pulled into my driveway. The two story, brick house was completely dark, a castle forsaken in the heart of Mary Noll. There were no other cars in the driveway.

"Looks like nobody is home, Danny." She placed her hand on the inside of my thigh.

"Would you like a personal tour of the place?" I tried not to talk out of line because I began to feel a little nervous.

"I'd love to. I'm glad you came over today because I'm in a very submissive mood tonight."

"You wouldn't mind preparing a little bite to eat? I haven't eaten all day." I looked at her hoping for an affirmative answer.

Sadie opened her door, got out and slammed the car door. I thought she had broken it. She was walking away, probably heading home to her mother. I didn't waste any time getting out of the car.

"Sadie!" She stopped. I ran over to her.

"I'm sorry, Danny." She knelt down in the grass and put her arms around my hips and said, "I'd do

anything for you tonight but cook." She rested her head against my stomach.

I couldn't help but submit to her. The excitement phase, the first phase of the response cycle had begun. And according to Masters and Johnson, the plateau phase, the orgasmic phase and finally the resolution phase, would soon follow and make the cycle complete.

Anonymous

Could It Really Happen To Us

It was such a gloomy day. The clouds were gray and a slow, silent drizzle was coming down. Of course everyday seemed gloomy then. Pallen, Ohio, just was not the way it used to be. Maybe it would be better to say Mike and I were not the way we used to be.

Even as I sit here now, two years later, in the same house, in the same little town, I still remember my feelings as if it were just yesterday.

It seemed like it had been so many weeks since Mike and I had had any real communication. We had been married only four years, but Mike seemed to be wrapped up in his work. His work as a researcher was very important, but it was taking over our life.

We both had awakened that morning to the drizzle, but it did not really add to the loneliness that I was feeling. I had gotten dressed and gone out in the kitchen to make breakfast for Mike, before he had to leave for work.

While I was getting the breakfast ready, I thought all the while about how to approach Mike with what I thought. I knew what he would say. He would just tell me I was wrong and not to think about it any longer.

Mike was like that. He was a very easy-going sort of man. Nothing really bothered him unless I was ill or if something that he was researching on failed. I felt I was an equal to his work.

Mike kissed me and I put his breakfast on the table. I knew he was very tired, but I had to know what we were up against.

The same conversation had come up many times before, but it was always tossed aside. Now, I had to know.

All the worries and fears that were building up inside of me, I blurted out. Mike looked at me very stunned and with a questioning look, but kept listening.

"Mike, I feel as though I am equal to your work," I said. He started to say something, but I stopped him. I told him about our communication gap and I started to cry. It always seemed as though I started to cry whenever something important had to be settled.

While I stood there crying, Mike put his arms around me and held me close to him. For a moment it seemed as though we had just been married. Mike grabbed my shoulders. "Sandy, I know it has been rough, but if we ever want to get ahead, I have to work long hours now. It is not as if I want to, Sandy. It is for you, can't you see? I want you to be happy."

"Mike, I am happy. I'm happy the way I am, but not as a widow to her husband's work."

Mike just looked at me very intensely and said, "I love you. You are just depressed. Why don't you call Mr. Raynor and tell him you'll not be in today. He won't mind. Listen, I have to go to work now, but I'll get in touch with you later. Bye." With that he kissed me and left.

I sat at the table for a long while not thinking about anything. I thought maybe Mike was right, I was just depressed, but the doubt still held me.

I called Mr. Raynor and he hoped I felt better very soon.

I went back and cleaned up the half-eaten breakfast and washed the dishes, but the time seemed to drag by. By eleven o'clock I was ready to go to work, all I had to do was dress.

As I was getting dressed, the phone rang. "Sam," the man said. Oh, no one had called me Sam in years. "Sam, are you there?" "Yes, I am," I said. Sam had been my nickname in high school, but since I had married, it had tapered off.

I was in a glory all my own. Just when I needed to be reminded of happy times, he called. We talked for awhile about silly things that happened to us in high school, but it brought back wonderful memories. He asked me to have lunch with him in the same little restaurant where we used to have our romantic meals. It was really a hang out for the kids then, but many happy times were spent there.

When I got to the restaurant, there he sat, my old boyfriend from high school who I had long since married.

Mike sat there, with his eyes shining blue, just as he had sat there five years ago. He also said that one magic word, "Sam," that made me feel so contented and happy.

He had understood this morning. He knew what I meant. I was the one who did not understand. From that day on, though, I knew I would try to understand him because he understood everything about Sandy, even Sam.

Betty Masching

The Forever Trip

His father had left on another business trip that morning. It was no different than the rest except this time his mother had gone along, leaving Mark by himself for the weekend.

Because of his parents' concern for their son there was an extra supply of food and insulin in the house, more than enough to last the weekend, and they had been sure to leave some extra money for him, too. Also out of concern for their son they made him promise to have two things in the house while they were away. No girls and no parties. To make sure these instructions were carried out, they enlisted the service of several neighbors to watch the house.

Things really didn't seem very different yet because at four o'clock on Fridays he was usually the only one home anyway, since both his parents didn't get home from work 'till six. Mark gave himself an injection as he had done since he was twelve. Carefully the hypodermic needle was prepared and after selecting a spot for the injection the needle was skillfully inserted, its contents flowing into his body.

Although he had acquired precise skill in using the needle from the daily practice as a diabetic, this time the contents of the needle was not insulin.

Things couldn't have been more perfect. His parents being away, leaving Mark the weekend to himself, afforded him the perfect opportunity.

As he leaned back into the comfortable chair in which he was seated. The darkness of the short winter day evolving to night went unnoticed to Mark. His entire being was concentrating totally on the changes taking place only within himself. An intense feeling of lightness overcame him and Mark experienced a sensation of rising which made him feel (funny as it sounded) as if he were a helium balloon upon being released. This feeling of lightness made Mark feel very free, almost as if he'd shed a clumsy coat of armor. Then suddenly, he realized what being high <u>really</u> was. He'd often heard people talking about being "high" and in fact he thought <u>he'd</u> been "high" before, but this -- THIS was high.

It was a literal high. So real, in fact, that -- he was looking down from above and could see his body. He had supposed that getting high was just one of those things you have to experience before you know what it's like.

Then a weird thing happened. Mark's whole life passed before his eyes in just a few seconds. A life it had taken years to live flashed before him and was over in just a few seconds.— just like that! It was finished. Through. So quick.

Mark was troubled for awhile, but then his attention turned back to watching his body. He kept watching until, because of the night's blackness which surrounded it, it was no longer visible. The obvious thing to do, of course, was to turn on a light. So, he tried to reach his arm up to turn on the lamp sitting on the large end table beside him, but this, he found, was impossible to accomplish, for he was unable to make his arm move. For a minute Mark was disturbed, but then he became aggravated at the inconvenience of being in the dark. Finally he decided to forget about it and enjoy the trip.

After what seemed to be only a few minutes the darkness which filled the room broke into shadowy pieces and receded when Friday night became Saturday morning.

In his rush to leave for school Friday morning Mark must have accidentally set his clock radio because it clicked on about seven thirty. The d.j. announced, "It's going to be a mild day, temperatures up into the thirties and partly cloudy. The time is 7:32 and here's <u>America</u>." I've been through the desert on a horse with no name. That's all Mark caught of the song. After that the words seemed to melt into a steady droan.

As the darkness of the night diminished, the forms of the furniture and of his own body once again became visible. When the room was fully illuminated, Mark noticed that his body had still not moved. He thought it strange. Usually on trips it was normal to hallucinate and not have control of his mind, but he had never before lost control of his body. This time, though, it was exactly the opposite. He was perfectly aware of everything around him and very much in control of his mind, but he had no ability whatsoever to make his body move.

As Mark was thinking about this, the day continued to age until at three thirty p.m. his attention fell on the clock. Realizing the time, Mark began to wonder about when he would be coming down from the trip. It seemed to be lasting quite a while. At first he wished this feeling of lightness and freedom would go on forever, but now he became increasingly anxious for it to end. Another short winter day began evolving to night, as had happened many times before, but this time Mark was acutely aware of the change. As the darkness grew, so too, did Mark's impatience. The length of the trip had begun to grow unbearable when the phone rang.

It not only rang. It rang and rang and rang and rang and rang and rang. If it continued much longer, he thought he'd go crazy because he knew he could not stop the ringing by answering it. Finally came silence, but not for long.

About five maybe ten minutes later the doorbell rang. It rang several times more and since no one answered, the callers (neighbors who had promised to keep an eye on the house) began peering through various windows in an attempt to locate Mark. When they were finally able to see him in the dim and still fading light, he looked as if he were asleep. Returning to the door they turned the knob admitting themselves quietly. Then, just as quietly they entered the room where Mark was seated. Mark watched as the pair tiptoed over to where his body was and one of them kneeled beside the chair.

A soft hand touched lightly on Mark's arm as its owner was about to wake him. But instead of following the touch by words directed to Mark, the face turned ashen white and the barely audible voice in disbelief whispered, "He's dead."

Maureen Easson

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Prologue

Jimmi Hendrix asks, "Is this tomorrow, or just the end of time?" At exactly 1:30 p.m., August 3, 2033, every television in the world filled with the image of Lew O'Conner.

"Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the greatest experiment in the history of man." Lew had been picked by the major networks to ramrod this planet wide experiment and he was making the most of it.

"Drs. Thomas, Ingles, Manns, and Essington have devoted their entire scientific careers to understanding time. Now, after more than eleven years of research, they are ready for the final test.

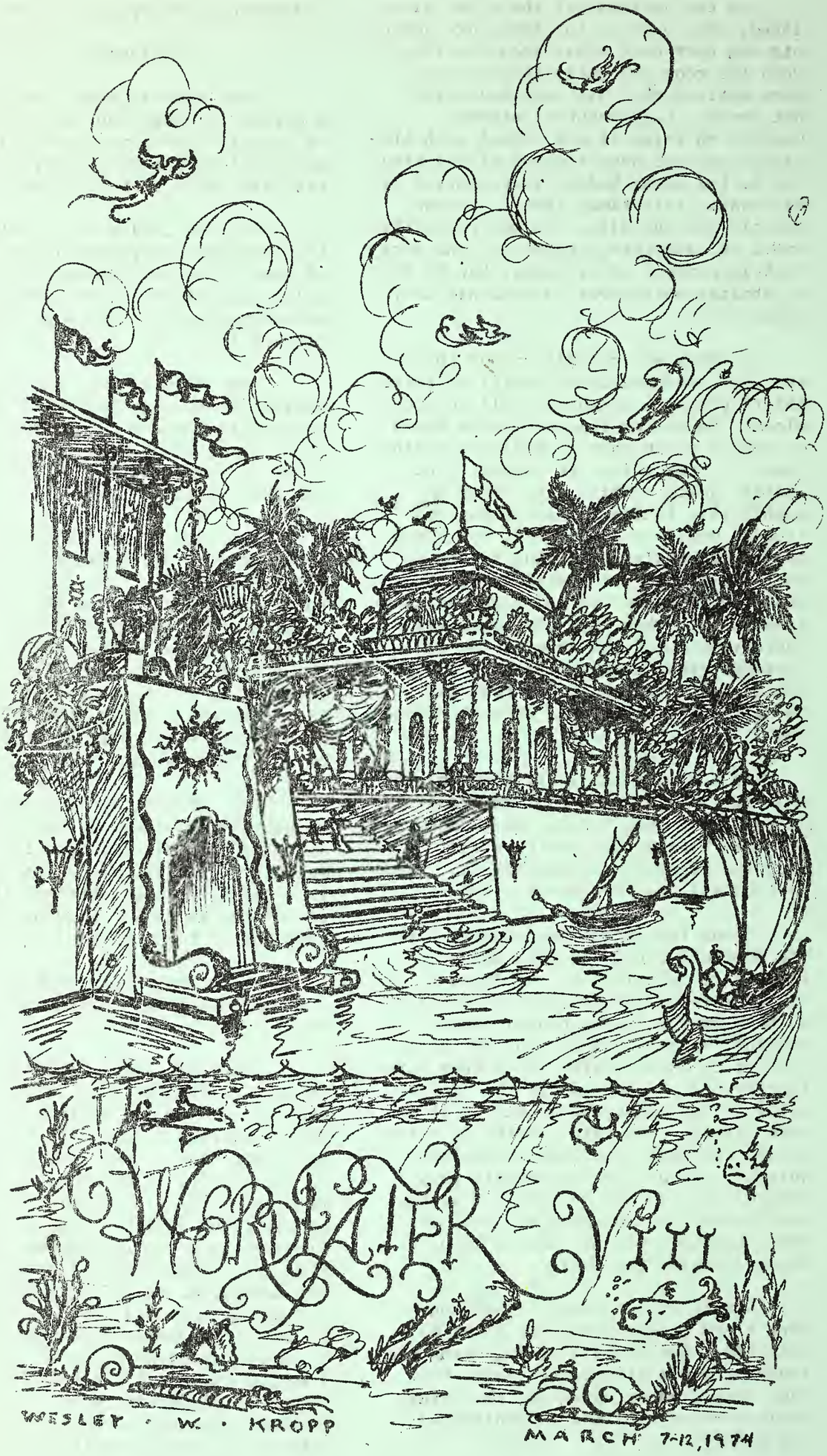
"You know from local network specials that Dr. Essington is the head of this team. At 68, he is known the world over as <u>the</u> expert on time. His theories on the relationship between matter, time, and aging have won him a Nobel prize. Seven years ago he said that time is like a river, a river that started with creation and will stop with the end of the universe.

"Drs. Thomas, Ingles, and Manns separately expanded on this theory and said that all the universe floats on this river like a boat and that it is possible to row upstream; that is, to go back in time. Eleven years ago they united to prove it.

"Dr. Thomas is with us and she will explain this experiment for us. Dr. Thomas."

"Thank you Lew." Although she is 42, Dr. Thomas' 5'7" frame still retains much of her youthly beauty. She is wearing a white lab robe over her light blue dress. Her hands are in the pockets of the robe and she is continually playing with the keys in the right pocket. "The scientific language is boringly complex, but the allegory of the river is accurate. Our experiment is to prove that the machine we designed can back time up. In the first phase of the experiment we placed an eight week old puppy in a sealed chamber for a half hour. Through a glass window we have filmed his movements in the chamber as he played. In another half hour, we will remove him from the chamber and begin phase two."

"Could you explain what you mean by hours and minutes?"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